Final Synopsis of the Thesis

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"Discourses on Nationalism : A Critical Study of English Prose in Colonial India"

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Chapter One

Introduction

The first chapter deals with the discussion of the concept of nationalism, its development and varieties as well as its relation to India. Word 'nation is derived from Latin word 'natio', which means birth. Nirad Chaudhuri points out that 'nationalism' is a derivative of the word nation through the derived adjective 'national'. He also brings it to our notice that in the Oxford English Dictionary word 'nation' for the first time in 1300 A.D. but the derivative word did not appear till 1836. It is evident from this fact that rise of 'nationalism', as some scholars believe, could be seen as the post French Revolution phenomena.

During the last century the idea of 'nationalism' acquired centre stage so we see many scholars from different disciplines giving primacy to its study. There are varieties of nationalism and there is also a lot of difference in the way different scholars understood the term. Anthony D. Smith has classified the scholars in two categories. The first category is of primordialists and the other one is of modernists. The previous consider that nationalism is a modern manifestation of the primordial ethnic identity, where as the latter believe that it is essentially a modern creation with its roots in pre-modern times. Smith believes that ethnic identities existed for thousands of years.

Among the modernist scholars Earnest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, Eric Hobsbawm and some others are prominent exponents of theories of nationalism. Anderson Insists that nationalism is definitely an imagined

community which is a product of modern times and also believes that print-capitalism laid the foundations for national consciousness.

Gellner asserts that, among other things, formation of 'nation' involves universalization of liberty, social mobility and formal equality. He believes that the process should include creation of a homogeneous culture, power and access to power, or a cultural condition in which there shall be equal distribution of power within the culture.

In India the discourses of nationalism were definitely the result of British rule. Basically the Britishers came to India with a purpose of trading. They established the East India Company with its headquarters at Surat But perceiving the political void developed political interests. Battle of Plassy was its confirmation. Some attribute the British victory in this war to their superiority in weapons, technology, military discipline and shrewd diplomacy. However, A. K. Mehrotra is of the opinion that Col. Robert Clive's victory over Siraj-ud-Daula was more due to compradors of Bengal, Jagat Seths, than British superiority in other fields. These wealthy ahindu and Jain merchants as well as bankers plotted Siraj-ud-Daula's overthrow as a result of the Mughal imposition which reduced their profit margin. The East India Company joined the conspiracy. This demonstrates that the Raj was established with the support from elites and upper class groups belonging to Hindu as well as Muslim society. In doing so they saw new opportunity of prospering and their expectations were not unfounded. Colonial administration rewarded Brahmins and other upper caste elites with important positions. As a result of understanding between colonial administration and Indian elites the British policy of non-interference in social and religious matters of Hindu society evolved.

A class of European Orientalists emerged during early colonial period. Wilson, Williams, Colebrook, Max Muller and some others were prominent

among them. They saw striking similarities between Latin, Greek and Sanskrit languages, so they propounded that Sanskrit belonged to the same language family to which Latin belonged. This gave currency to the idea that Indo-Europeans had a common ancestry as well as home land and the people who used Sanskrit as their language had migrated to India. This theory became popular among Indian upper castes immediately and they started regarding themselves Aryans and so related to colonial rulers. They proclaimed their blood relationship with the colonial rulers and took pride in it. Vedic-Brahmanic tradition became central to India. Naturally the remaining masses were supposed to be non Aryans and the gulf which already existed between them further widened. Among other Indian nationalists Tilak and Vivekananda also were staunch believers in this theory.

Hobsbawm states that, in every society elites take initiative in the nationalist movement in order to safeguard the special privileges which they traditionally enjoyed. The middle class and peasants follow them in order to protect their lifestyle from the onslaught of industrial culture imposed upon them.

During early colonial period education was centred in the coastal presidencies of Madras, Bombay and Calcutta. Naturally urban elites had an easy access to it so they established monopoly over it. Education was not open for the masses in the pre-colonial Hindu society. It was a privilege of upper castes, the same tradition continued even during the colonial period. Women shared the same fate. As the elite class was vocal it led the movement of nationalism in which the aspirations of the masses, including women, remained on the margin.

Scholars of Persian during earlier era became scholars of English in the new regime. They felt an urge to express their aspirations in the newly acquired language and they began publishing periodicals in it. Spread of

English education introduced the educated class to the culture of Europe. Some of them were attracted to it, to which M.K.Naik calls Derozio Men. At the same time we notice attempts of revival of Hinduism, particularly in Bengal. Tilak, Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo were the pioneers of this movement. As they were also the spokespersons of Indian nationalism, they had their impact on the developments in the society.

This study aims at examining non-fictional prose dealing with discourses of nationalism so a survey of emergence of prose in Indian English Literature is also undertaken.

Chapter Two

M.K.Gandhi had a distinct type of nationalism which could be seen in Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule the treatise he wrote in the form of dialogue between an editor and his reader. In it he answers questions asked by his imaginary reader and there by touces many important issues. Like Mehrotra he also believes that India lost to Britain because Indians were tempted to do so due to their greed for gold. in order to become rich they welcomed the Company's Officers with open arms. He also states that there were many princely states which fought amongst themselves and asked for help from the Company's Officers. That gave away the country to the Company. Though basically a political person, Gandhi was deeply religious. He believed in Hindu scriptures and their sanctity. He had such a deep faith in them that whoever questioned their authority was the enemy of Hinduism for him.

Gandhi believed in Chaturvarnya and thought that it is essential for any developed society. In the beginning He also held that caste system is a helpful thing for the society but later on he changed his views. He opposed untouchability and formed an organization to carry out the task of its removal.

Village, for him, was the ideal unit of community. He believed in Ramrajya and also in the idea of trusteeship. All these ideas were contradictory to his opposition to the untouchability because these were the institutions which perpetuated the caste system. This is a contradiction that we notice in Gandhi's idea of swaraj. Other important factor that contributed to the failure in the eradication of untouchability was that though he himself was enthusiastic about its removal, his party colleagues did not share his zeal for that task. They had a lukewarm attitude towards it. He believed that nationalism could function well along with four verna system, he did not see any harm in it. His failure in removal of untouchability could be attributed to this also.

Chapter Three

The third chapter deals with cultural nationalism. The first text selected in this regard is 'Hindutva' by V.D. Savarkar. In this book Savarkar states that a failure to come to a correct definition of 'Hindu' is because this term is viewed through religious view alone. People who tried to define 'Hindu' dwelt entirely upon the beliefs, the dogmas, the doctrines and the practices that were there among Hindus. Seen from this angle there is definitely no unity as well as uniformity in them. Savarkar views the issue from a different view point. He approaches the issue from historical perspective and takes an account of Hindus beginning with Vedic period. He firmly believes that Hindus are a nation and so he coined the term 'Hindu Rashtra'.

He also gives a poetic definition of who belongs to this nation and also defines geographical boundaries of the nation. He says, the land between the mountain, Himalayas and the sea, Indian Ocean is the 'Hindu Rashtra' and whose fatherland as well as holy land is within the limits drawn by him, belong to it. Loyalty to fatherland and loyalty to one's holy land are the two important factors that control the existence of the country. Naturally one

whose loyalties are divided becomes unpredictable as per his views. He proclaimed that his outlook is scientific so he did not believe in caste. He wanted all Hindus to unite forgetting the barriers. He is also unique in so far as he does not believe in cow worship. While other Hindu leaders believed the cow to be holy, he believed that it is simply a useful animal.

However he glorified the Hindu past and in doing so states that everything Hindu is great. Even he goes to the extent of calling the Peshwa's regime, which is despised by many Indians, "the last of our Hindu empire". Another contradiction we see in him is that he does not believe in caste but he does not denounce the Chaturvarnya system, and the scriptures which accord sanction to inequality. This renders him ineffective in creation of real nationalism.

M.S.Golwalkar's "We or Our Nation Defined" is another text which is examined in order to study cultural nationalism. He was an ideologue of an organisation called as "Rashtriya Swyamsevak Sangh". In this text he ardently supports Extremist Hinduism. He believes in the sanctity of everything that goes by the name of Hindu scriptures. Not only scriptures but he also believes in the social system propagated in them. Manusmriti is supposed to be a notorious text because it propagates inequality. Golwalkar praises its author, Manu, as the first and the greatest law giver of the world.

He sees nothing wrong in the caste system, on the contrary he seeks comfort that Hinduism is not the only religion which has castes and the other religions also have them.

His belief perpetuation of inequality goes to such an extent that he expects all the people who do not belong to Hindu religion to confirm to the rules of Hinduism accept a subordinate position and not expect even citizen's rights. He also states that the language to be used in India should be Hindi

which is influenced by Sanskrit. This ensures the power in the hands of elite class. So this type of nationalism tends to exclude the common masses.

Chapter Four

M .N. Roy is a thinker who has interpreted nationalism in a different way. His text "The Future of Indian Politics" is selected for scrutiny. Roy goes through various phases of nationalism . As a youth he was influenced by Bankim chandra Chatterji's 'Anand Math' and Arobindo's 'Bhavani Mandir'. In his early days he joined the group of nationalists who believed in armed struggle. While in America he attended a meeting organised by Lala Lajpat Rai in order to gather support in favour of India's freedom struggle, but he was not satisfied with views expressed by Lalaji. Disillusioned by such nationalists he started reading Marx and was influenced by his philosophy. He became a Marxist.

Roy is critical of metaphysical concept of nationalism because he had doubts that it might control individual freedom . As it is popularly believed duties of citizens are more important than his rights in order to protect nation's glory. He fears that improper alliance with nationalism might bring collectivism in democracy resulting in neglect of citizens' rights. He seems to hold nationalism responsible for all the perversities that have entered in to present day politics, whether it is national or international.

Though Roy thought of peasants and workers he seems to overlook the fact that inequality in India is not just a result of economic status but it is even deeper, it has religious sanction behind it. There is caste system which decides the status of an individual in the society.

Rabindranath Tagore, poet and an eminent educationist expressed his views on nationalism in his three lectures which were later collected in a book. Tagore says that he is not against one nation in particular, but against the general idea of nation. He believes that instead of uniting the people in the name of nations this feeling should be extended to whole world. This makes it clear that Tagore is an internationalist who encompasses whole humanity instead of raising the boundaries of nations.

He sees nationalism in three chief ways, as described in his speeches. Japanese nationalism , Western nationalism and Indian nationalism . Western

nationalism, to him, is predatory nationalism and believes that it is an organised selfish nationalism which they worship as religion. It is his opinion that behind the western nationalism there is a spirit of conflict and conquest. He goes to the extent of calling it a cruel epidemic of evil that is sweeping over human world.

India's problem, he says, is not political, but it is social. He feels that there is no basis of nationalism in India. He also warns that if we cherish a weakness in our social structure that will prove to be the source of danger to our politics.

Chapter Five

Another kind of nationalism is propagated by Dr. Ambedkar. "What Congress and Gandhi Have done to the Untouchables" is the text selected for the study. He had studied the Hindu social system thoroughly and found that it is not capable of organisation. It utterly lacks the capacity to unite. In fact it has fissiparous tendencies, so one cannot build a society on its basis, there is no possibility of building a nation on it. He brings out the fallacy behind Gandhi's efforts of eradicating untouchability.

Basis for building any nation, according to him, is equality, liberty and fraternity. These are the principles on which modern nations are built. Naturally he is against everything that propagated inequality, humiliation and exploitation. He stood not only for equality among men, but he insisted on doing away with patriarchal attitude and advocated for the equality for women also. He argued that the Hindu scriptures supported inequality that is why there are yawning gaps between social groups in the name of caste. He also expressed views against glorifying the past which is an important feature of cultural nationalism.

Chapter Six

To sum up we can say that of the authors studied Golvalkar, Gandhi and Dr. Ambedkar had a deep know ledge of Indian social system . If one w ishes to build a nation one has to have this ideas. Of the three Golw alkar w as not in the favour of change. He w anted new nation to be built on the same old platform . Gandhi W anted a change but it w as limited to untouchability and insisted on continuation of rest of the social system . He also w anted Ram rajya w hich w ould prove detrimental to the nation to be. Dr. Ambedkar w anted to change the social structure to suit a modern nation. Tagore and Roy had more faith in making the w hole humanity one unit rather than dividing them in the name of nation.

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